

THE PROGRESS OF INFIDELITY.

It is acknowledged by all unprejudiced persons capable of judging, that infidelity is on the increase. Speaking upon this subject, the *Chicago Tribune* says: "It is idle for the people of a religious habit, and especially for those who are charged with nursing and promoting piety, to ignore the progress which infidelity has been making during the past few years. The contrast between the crowded auditorium in which Col. Ingersoll delivered his lecture recently, with the sparse attendance which awaited similar appearances a few years ago, furnishes a striking evidence of its progress." The writer continues his theme, and very truthfully says: "The progress of infidelity, as signalized by Ingersoll's success, likewise denotes the growth and spread of irreverence. Perhaps this is the worst feature of the new order of things. The danger of irreverence is its invasive tendency. Beginning with its forms, it soon extends to the essence; starting with dogma, it is apt to proceed at a rapid rate to principle, society, and the family. The infidel must provide his own morality, and impose his own restraints. No man or sect is his guardian, and his code of ethics is of his own making. The modern spirit of progress is creating sad havoc with the traditions and precedents which might continue their influence even when the inspiration of Scriptures is doubted."

It is a very sad fact, that at this time, when God, His Christ, and His Holy Book are so ruthlessly assailed [R326 : page 2] by these godless, profane infidels, that the church has very nearly lost its power to withstand the oncoming tide. The finely written essays of her ministers are blank cartridges, when directed against such batteries. The pomp and glitter of modern worship, with sensational story-telling for Gospel, is as powerless to resist this overwhelming infidelity, as a shadow would be to stop a cyclone. The *Tribune* further says:

"There is naturally great diversity of opinion as to the effect of the palpable growth of infidelity that marks our age. The aggressive infidel like Ingersoll believes it to be an essential and valuable part of the world's progress. To him it denotes the downfall of superstition and the spread of reason and enlightenment. The conservative doubter is inclined to deprecate the contagion of infidelity. He believes himself and most of those who have exchanged their doubts with him to be capable of shaping their morals in the right direction, but fears that the removal of restraints will lead the masses to excess and riot of free thought and irresponsible actions. The churchman condemns without qualification the new departure as sacrilegious and wicked, leading to all the penalties in this life and the future which the strictest construction of the church tenants impose upon the infidel and the scoffer. These various sentiments can find no common ground upon which to meet, and infidelity must take its course, except as it may be restrained by moral and social influences, for the day of the rack and the thumb-screw, the terror of the cross and the stake are gone forever."

It would seem to be a cruel accusation to make, to say that the church has done much to produce this fearful increase of infidelity, but so it appears from what infidels and all unprejudiced writers say. Not that the church had intended any such thing, but many of her dogmas, such as unconditional election, man's inherent immortality, endless torture as punishment for sin, the endlessness of evil and rebellion against God, appear so unreasonable and arbitrary, and present the character of a just and merciful Creator and Ruler in a contradictory light, that these infidels, assuming that the teaching of the church is in harmony with the Bible, have, without critically testing these dogmas by the Scriptures, rejected the Church, the Bible, and its Author. If this be true, then the only antidote for this infidel poison is the presentation and adoption of the true Bible theology, by which God and His revelations shall be presented in their true character.

Brethren, the present period, with all the wonderful circumstances crowded into it, offers the most glorious opportunity to the loyal servants of Christ to defend Deity, Jesus Christ, and the holy Scriptures, that was ever offered to any generation of God's servants since the world began. The present hours are truly filled with grand opportunities, sublime duties, such as angels and prophets were amazed to see in vision, and such as holy men have desired to enjoy, but died without enjoying the grand privilege. May the God of all grace give us wisdom not to waste these golden opportunities in children's play, striving about personal, carnal things, catching motes, while golden crowns are within reach.--*Selected*.

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